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LAW AND LIBERTY

IN THE

Manifestations of the Human Will.

Nature and Origin of Evil,

— AND —

The Limit of Righteous Severity in the
Punishment of Sin.

BY DANIEL DODGE

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Law and Liberty in the Manifestations of the Human Will.

THE REIGN OF LAW in the material world is now so generally recognized that I think it may be said to be undisputed. In all the realm of matter we find no exception to the universality of its sway, or the undeviating certainty of its operation. And we believe in none. We allege without fear of contradiction that always and everywhere the same material substance, under the same conditions, will exhibit the same phenomena. We allege that all the changes we behold in the material world are results of antecedent causes, and that the same cause operating under the same conditions, will invariably produce the same result.

That a similiar constancy of relations is apparent in the world of mind does not seem to be so generally recognized. A vigorous and persistent study of the subject, however, it seems to the writer, must lead every observing and logical mind to the conclusion that such a constancy is just as real in the latter as in the former; that every thought, every feeling, every mental act; in short, every mental and spiritual phenomenon, is governed by laws just as certain and undeviating in their operation as those which rule in the world of matter.

If this is so it is a most important truth. What would be the condition of the material world without its unvarying laws? Suspend the operation of these laws, but for a

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moment, and the whole visible universe would fall at once into a state of chaos. With equal certainty, I think, it may be said that a suspension of the laws of mind would result in a complete suspension or derangement of all the manifestations of mind. And these laws, as already remarked, upon careful observation will be found to prevail in every department of man's spiritual nature, and to govern all the phenomena it exhibits.

To the truth of this proposition the phenomena of volition present no exception. Every act of volition is evidently governed by laws as certain and invariable in their operation as those which govern the movements of the planets in their orbits. But these laws in no degree impair the *freedom* of volition. On the contrary they are absolutely essential to the enjoyment of that freedom. Freedom of will is not freedom from the control of law; but freedom of compliance with it. A free act of the will is a *pleasurable yielding* to the power of spiritual and moral forces. A man whose volitions were not governed by the laws of mind would be an anomaly. He would possess no moral character either good or bad. He could not be an accountable being.

Nor does the subjection of the will to the operation of these laws degrade the human mind to the level of a machine, whatever real or fancied analogy there may be between them. A machine is a material structure actuated by material forces. The human mind is a spiritual existence actuated by spiritual forces. But this distinction between material and spiritual forces does not imply a difference in their essential nature. It relates only to the phenomena attending their manifestation.

But what do we mean by law? And what do we mean by force?

Law in general, I think, as distinguished from mere precept, or command, may be defined to be, simply, *constancy of relations*. That constancy may appear in the association of attributes in a subject, in the relation between phenomena and conditions, or in any one of many others that might be named. It matters not in what it appears; but wherever it does appear a specification of the phenomena in which it appears, together with their conditions and the order of their relations, may be regarded as the statement of a law.

I do not allege that the definition above given is complete, but I think it is sufficient for the purposes of this discussion.

When we say that water will always congeal at a temperature of thirty-two degrees, Fahrenheit, we state a law of matter.

When we say that beauty, when perceived by the mind of man, always excites a pleasing emotion we state a law of mind.

The most concise and comprehensive definition I can give of force is that it is *that energy that insures the constancy of law*. Of its origin and essential nature we know nothing whatever except that it is the effectual behest of him who said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

What more than this do we know of the essence and origin of the force of gravitation? What more of that power in beauty that compels our admiration?

When, therefore, I speak of the operation of law I mean the operation of that energy that insures its constancy.

From the above definition of force it will be seen that it can never interfere with the constancy of law, since it is itself the very energy that insures that constancy. I

do not mean by this that opposing forces never collide. They certainly do. The Creator of all things, when he planned the universe, *meant* collision of forces. But he also meant constancy and co-operation ; constancy in the law ; for both the collision and its results are always accordant with law ; co-operation of forces ; for in colliding they co-operate to produce a new result. And it is through the co-operation of colliding forces that his grandest purposes have been achieved.

I remarked above that the same material under the same conditions will always exhibit the same phenomena. This we consider a law of matter. When we have ascertained what particular phenomena a given substance will exhibit under given conditions we immediately associate those phenomena with something inherent in the subject in which they are observed ; a something which we call a property, quality, attribute, or capability. Thus when we present a piece of soft iron to a magnetic needle the equilibrium of the needle is disturbed. One of its poles turns towards the iron. And we ascribe this result to a certain correlation between some property inherent in the iron and a property in the needle ; a correlation of properties on which we regard the result as dependent. So it is in the world of mind. There also we observe phenomena analogous to this. If you present to a child a glittering toy he will reach out his hand for it. And this phenomenon is just as obviously the result of a certain correlation between a property, or capability, inherent in the mind of the child and a property in the toy as was the vibration of the needle a result of correlated properties in material things alone.

We say that the vibration of the needle was *caused* by the approach of the iron. With the same propriety we

may say that the effort of the child was caused by the presentation of the toy. This is not to say that the two causes in the cases presented operated in the same way. Evidently they did not. In the case of the child we can trace a number of intermediate causes which we cannot do in the case of the needle.

Another important difference we notice. The movement of the needle was simply an impassive yielding to the force that acted upon it. That in the mind of the child was a *pleasurable* yielding; a yielding attended with manifest enjoyment. In this consisted the freedom of its will. But the point on which I am now insisting is that in each case the phenomenon presented was the result of an antecedent cause, and in both the result was in accordance with law, and was produced by the operation of that energy that insures its constancy. In the needle it was a phenomenon of matter. In the child it was a phenomenon of mind; the voluntary act of a free agent. But the child's freedom of will did not interfere with the operation of law, nor did the operation of law impair his freedom of will. The laws of his nature operated *through* the free action of his will.

As the child grows up there will be a gradual change in his inherent qualities. A mere child's toy will not continue to control his conduct. He will have new desires and, perhaps, higher aims. But the same *law* will continue to rule. Some object of desire will move him to action, and that through the freedom of his will. And what that object of desire will be will depend on what he is; upon his inherent qualities; qualities existing in him antecedently to the development of their results in outward conduct.

Now, with respect to *moral* conduct, what is that law?

Our Saviour himself has defined and illustrated it: "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them."

Can anything be more explicit than this? It is the announcement of a most important law; the law of correspondence between the inherent qualities of a man and his outward conduct.

Now this correspondence is brought about by the co-operation of several subsidiary laws. I will notice but a few:

The first is, that there is always a certain correlation between the qualities of a man's heart and the object capable of exciting his most ardent desires. If that object is the good of others, we call him a good man. If it is the injury of others, or his own pleasure only, regardless of consequences to others, we call him a bad one.

The second is, that when there has been thus awakened a desire more ardent than any other of which the subject is conscious at the time, and concurrently with the consciousness of that desire, the intellect perceives a possibility of attaining the object thereof through appropriate effort, there immediately ensues a consciousness of pleasure corresponding in intensity with the intensity of the desire. But in this proposition we must, of course, regard all concurrent desires in their united effectiveness as a unit.

The third is, that when the possibility of attainment

perceived by the intellect is a present possibility there immediately ensues a conscious impulsion of the will power towards making the contemplated effort.

The fourth is, that to that impulsive force the will power invariably yields, and yields with pleasure.

The fifth is, that when all these conditions are fulfilled, the contemplated effort immediately follows, and outward conduct is the result. If the end was good the achievement is good; if bad the achievement is bad. And thus is fulfilled the law propounded, the law of correspondence between the inherent qualities of a man and his outward conduct.

In tracing this series of phenomena I have not forgotten the power of conscience in controlling human conduct. But an approving conscience is as truly an object of desire as any external and material object, and its relations to the action of the will are the same as those of any other object.

Let us keep in mind then that what we call the will power is a capability that, like every other capability of created things, has no power to manifest itself except under specific conditions, and in accordance with law. And one invariable condition of its manifestation is that it be attended with a pleasurable emotion, whether that pleasure result from the approval of conscience, or from the gratification of some sordid desire. It is dependence on this attendant pleasure as a condition that gives to an act of volition the character of a *free* act. We act freely when we do as we please. In the above analysis, therefore, we find in the freedom of the will no obstacle whatever to the operation of law; and in the operation of law no obstacle to the free action of the will. They are perfectly harmonious.

It may be remarked, however, in connection with this analysis, that the possibility perceived by the intellect of obtaining an object of desire is not always a present possibility. In that case the pleasure resulting from the perception becomes continuous. We call it the pleasure of anticipation. And in place of an impulsion to immediate action there arises a propension, which we call a purpose, which is also continuous. But when the future possibility becomes a present one, the propension becomes an impulsion; the same results follow as described above, and the anticipation gives place to realization. But in all this we find no conflict between freedom of will and the operation of law.

Now, the correspondence between character and conduct we have been considering is not limited to a single incident in each man's life. It is a correspondence between his habitual conduct and the habitual temper of his heart. It involves, therefore, the constancy of their correspondence in a multitude of instances; and in each instance, constancy in the relation between conditions and phenomena in a long series of antecedents and consequents too numerous to be specified.

But constancy in the relations of things cannot be the result of chance. For chance, or what we call such, which is only varying conditions to us unknown, yields only uncertain and varying results. It must, therefore, have some intelligent power to account for it; some reliable force to insure it. Now, the only intelligence in the universe capable of grasping all these multitudinous conditions and their related phenomena is the *Divine Omniscience*. And the only force in the universe reliable and sufficient to insure the constancy of their relations is the *Divine Will*. It is by the force of God's

will, then, that the constancy of this law is insured: a force manifested at every step of the process by which the result is developed; controlling with absolute certainty every manifestation of the human will involved in that process, yet never impairing its freedom of action: for that freedom consists, as already seen, simply in the pleasure of yielding to that very force.

From the considerations above presented, it appears that human conduct is a result of antecedent causes; a result effected by the operation of laws instituted and enforced by the Creator.

But is it not apparent that this economic provision of the Divine Plan is just the thing required to render man an accountable being and a fit subject of moral government? By accountable I mean accountable for his conduct.

Suppose for a moment the above-considered law of correspondence between man's inherent qualities and his resultant conduct to be suspended, would he remain an accountable being? Could it be demanded of him *why* did you do this or that? Could we have any evidence of his moral character? Could we say of the man who had robbed us, "he is a bad man?" Could we justly censure him?

His advocate might say "the act, indeed, was wrong." But he is not a bad man. You have no evidence whatever against him. You can prove no correspondence between his character and his conduct. Condemn the act as you please; but do not censure the man. He is not to blame." And the logic would be sound.

Suppose, again, the law by which the presentation of an object of desire induces an effort to attain that object were suspended, what result would follow? Neither

promises nor threatenings could move the man; neither hopes nor fears, nor love nor hatred could control his conduct. Persuasion would be unavailing. Rewards and punishments would be ineffectual; and punishment, therefore, simple cruelty, because utterly useless. Would such a man be a fit subject of moral government? I should answer, No.

Now, think for a moment what would be the *social* consequences of a suspension of these laws. Would they not be fearful? We could judge nothing from our neighbor's past life as to what he would do next. It would be as if he were seized with insanity. We could not trust our dearest friend. That friend would be just as likely to injure us in property or person as a robber, a savage, or a madman. Our lives would be in constant peril. Apprehension, confusion, and horror would everywhere prevail. Is it not apparent, then, that the institution of these laws is a most beneficent provision in the divine economy? And is not the supposition that the world is moving on without their constant operation repugnant to our common sense? The voluntary act of a fellow man we *instinctively* ascribe to some antecedent cause. If the act is one that surprises us we instinctively inquire: what made him do it? If it corresponds with his previous conduct we as instinctively remark: It is just what might be expected from such a man.

Now, in all this we see freedom of will co-existing with subjection to law. But the correspondence of character with conduct of which we have been speaking can be looked for only under certain conditions; freedom of person and freedom of will. The person may be imprisoned, bound or enslaved, and then the correspondence becomes impossible. He may also be deprived of free-

dom of will. Perhaps the will cannot be forced to *act* by any material agencies. But its power to act may be *suspended*. Make it impossible for a man to do what he would, or even apparently so to his mental vision, and he cannot will to do it, how strong soever his desire may be. Or administer to him a drug that stupefies his brain and you suspend his power to will while that condition lasts.

But when that will power acts at all it acts freely, and in thus acting it acts in accordance with law. Influenced by forces which it is capable of feeling, its course may deviate, now to the right, now to the left, like a planet in its orbit, yielding to the force of mutual attraction between itself and every other orb it passes, rendering the computation of the period of an eclipse a most complicated problem; yielding freely; yet pursuing its course in accordance with the invariable laws of attraction and momentum.

And here let me remark that the freedom I have been describing, freedom of compliance with law, is not only the most perfect we can desire, but the most perfect and valuable of which we can conceive. So far as we can see it is as perfect as that of our Creator himself. To conceive of a freedom in him to act otherwise than in accordance with law, would only impair our confidence in him. It is our confidence in the permanence of his attributes, and in that constancy of relations which is law, that gives us confidence in the stability of his purposes and the fulfillment of his promises. And what would be the value to a creature of any other freedom than this? Remove from his will-power the limitations involved in constancy of correspondence between its acts of volition and the prevailing desires of its possessor, and you would render him the most unfortunate creature con-

ceivable. His will-power would become useless, and his volitions mere chance phenomena?

The great truth upon which I have been dwelling, the perfect coincidence of free voluntary action with the operation of law, perhaps I might say their actual identity, assumes additional interest and importance when its light is thrown upon another great subject that has been very perplexing to many minds: The freedom of the human will as related to the sovereignty of God.

In following its light in this direction, let us bear in mind that man is a created being and that God is his Creator. Whether that breath of life that was breathed into his nostrils were a new creation, or a real effluence from the fount of uncreated self-existent life in his Creator, matters not for the purposes of this discussion; since, whatever it was, it was derived from his Creator, and not from some other and independent source. It was exclusively by the power of God, then, that he was endowed with every capability he possesses. And from that day to this, that same God, by his providence, has surrounded him with all the environments that conspire in any way to influence the action of his will.

But you will ask: was not the man thus created a *good* man? In some sense he was, no doubt. He was good in a sense in which goodness might be predicated of all other works of the Creator. He was good, also, in the undeveloped possibilities of his nature. But the power and grace of God alone could develop from those possibilities the glorious actualities that he purposed ultimately to develop. He was innocent, of course, till he had sinned. But innocence is only a negative goodness. Evidently he was not good in the sense of being made of the stuff that will resist temptation by its own inherent

virtue; for the very first test to which he was subjected developed his want of moral stamina. Previous to this event he had no sense of guilt; for he did not know himself. He was all unconscious of his weakness and dependence. But temptation came and tried him, and the result proved his respect for the command of his Maker to be insufficient to withstand the force of motives presented by the tempter. As a beginning of a most wonderful work he was perfect; exactly what his Creator had intended to produce. But he was not perfect in the sense of being a completed work, intended for no higher stage of development.

Now, in attempting to make clear the compatibility of the divine sovereignty, with the free action of the human will, as well as with the operation of every other force, whether in the realm of mind or matter, keeping in view the perfect coincidence of freedom of action with the operation of law, on which I have been dwelling, we have only to premise two propositions: First, that God's plan of the universe and of the administration of his laws is *all embracing*. Second, that it is *harmonious*.

The first of these propositions we can prove from his word. Therein it is declared that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;" that "all things were made by him;" that "there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, who worketh all in all;" that "he worketh all things *after the counsel of his own will*;" and that "of him and through him and to him are all things."

The second we may infer from his wisdom. To plan incongruities is the part of folly, not of wisdom. And God is wise. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God," exclaimed the

apostle Paul. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Now, in view of these two propositions, what possible contingency can ever arise involving any conflict between the divine sovereignty and the free action of the human will, or any other agency in nature?

Let us take an example :

You ask me if I believe that it was predetermined by the divine Being that Adam should die? I answer, yes. But, you reply : "Supposing he had not eaten the forbidden fruit, would his predestination to death have been just? Could a righteous God have carried it into effect? And, if not, would not his purpose have been frustrated? Would he not have been compelled by the principles of justice to change that purpose?"

I reply that you are begging the question at the outset. You ask me to suppose a thing that is not supposable under the premises. Such a supposition would involve the assumption of one of two things: either that the divine plan was not all-embracing, or else that it was incongruous; and either of these assumptions is a denial of one or the other of our premises, and therefore inadmissible. If Adam's death was a part of the divine plan, so was his transgression; so was the temptation; so was that quality in his nature which rendered him susceptible to the influence of the tempter; so were *all* the conditions upon which the result depended. No supposition is therefore admissible that omits any of these conditions.

A like solution may be found of every difficulty of this kind that can possibly be raised. They are all created by supposing conditions that can never exist while God is God.

But here you object that I represent the divine Being

as purposing one thing and commanding the very opposite. And you ask if this can be possible. I answer, most assuredly. As above remarked, in planning the universe the divine Being "*meant collision of forces*. And through these collisions his grandest purposes have been achieved." And this remark is as applicable to the manifestations of his power and wisdom in the world of mind as in that of matter. As in the material world he has prepared this earth for the habitation of man through the most tremendous upheavals, convulsions and collision of forces; through earthquake shocks and ocean storms; through volcanic eruptions and the grating and grinding of icebergs, so in the spiritual world, through collision of spiritual and moral forces; through agonizing struggles, protracted conflict, "law in the members warring against the law of the mind," incessant wrestling and repeated alterations of victory and defeat, he will elevate and prepare his creature, man, for a higher state than he ever occupied in the garden of Eden.

In Adam's temptation there was a collision of forces. The injunction of his Maker to abstain from the forbidden fruit was, no doubt, a powerfully restraining force. The seductions of the serpent, the desire for knowledge, the appetite for luxuries, and finally the persuasions of his wife, all conspiring, constituted a powerfully opposing force; and there was a collision. The result of that collision was a tremendous shock; a shock that left poor Adam, in a moral sense, prostrate in the dust. But that fall was one of the wise and beneficent purposes of his Maker. Through it he became acquainted with himself; a necessary condition of higher attainments than he had hitherto reached. Till now he had never known himself.

He had never learned his own weakness. He had never realized his utter and absolute dependence on the grace of his Maker to keep him in that happy state that had been his only experience hitherto. No doubt, he deplored his transgression. But what he might more deeply deplore was the terrible fact it disclosed to him that he was *capable* of transgression, and that he had nothing in himself that could secure him from falling to a still "lower deep." This was just the impression necessary to prepare him for the acceptance of a promised Saviour, and a willingness to be saved and sanctified, and raised to the highest conceivable degree of moral elevation by grace through Him.

Another objection will be raised. It will be asked, If man is a created being, and the conduct of his life is the result of inherent properties in his nature implanted there by his Creator; a result evolved through the operation of laws instituted and enforced by that Creator himself, how can that same divine Being in righteousness inflict punishment upon that conduct? I reply that, while it is *fitting* that he should inflict upon the transgressor the penalty of his transgression, such transgression is not the ground of his right to inflict it. That right rests entirely on other grounds. Its foundation stone is his own beneficence. Whether or not he shall inflict suffering in any case; on what conditions he shall inflict it, and in what measure, not exceeding the limits of his beneficence, are all questions of fitness and utility, not of his right to inflict it. That right is limited only by the measure of his own beneficence. Within that limit he may righteously inflict it wherever he sees fit, whether upon the innocent or the guilty; and wherever he sees fit to inflict it, its endurance by the

creature is but a service due to his Creator for the numberless benefactions he bestows. Then, blessed be his holy name! Let us bear with willing and loving submission whatever suffering he may lay upon us.

But its infliction as a penalty for sin is a pre-eminently beneficent provision; and, therefore, not only justified by his right to inflict it, but actually demanded by the benevolence of his nature. God is not too good to punish sin. He is too good not to do it.

But it is alleged that the inculcation of the views herein advocated disposes men to throw the blame of their sins off their own conscience on to their Creator. I do not admit the allegation. A partial and distorted presentation of the laws of volition may have that effect, but a complete and truthful one, never. Any statement of them that implies compulsion would do so, of course; but any such statement is erroneous. There is no compulsion whatever involved in their operation. *Impulsion* is not *compulsion*. One is consistent with the freedom of volition, the other is not. *Compulsion* involves the operation of a force to which the will power offers some resistance. But that impulse that precedes an act of free volition, as above described, meets with no resistance whatever in the will. To that impulse it yields freely and with pleasure; and that pleasure bears truthful witness to the qualities of heart upon which that yielding is conditioned. That pleasure cannot be seen by human eyes, but through its resultant overt acts its testimony will become apparent to the world; and even prior to those acts that testimony will accuse the heart before the tribunal of conscience, and the sting of remorse will be the penalty adjudged and inflicted by that tribunal.

But again it will be urged that a recognition of divine

agency in implanting in the heart of man inherent qualities from which his conduct legitimately springs must tend to abate in him a sense of the merit and demerit of those qualities. This I think is a mistake. The impression made on our sensibilities in view of the qualities of an object depends in no degree whatever on their origin. The presentation of an object of beauty evokes a pleasurable emotion in the mind of the observer regardless of the origin of that beauty. And the presentation of a loathsome object awakens a sense of disgust, also regardless of the origin of its loathsome features. It is true, the consideration of origin may sometimes awaken some additional and distinct emotion; as when we view a beautiful painting, while we enjoy the pleasure directly imparted thereby, we may also admire the skill of the artist who produced it. But this is only an incidental emotion. It neither intensifies nor abates that directly imparted by the beauty of the painting, and necessarily resulting therefrom.

The coarse and cheap article of pottery adapted to use in your back kitchen is not worthy of the same honorable position as the beautiful vase of Bohemian glass that adorns your parlor mantel; and you cannot make it *seem* to be so by reflecting that both are the production of the same hand.

The same may be said, I think, of those qualities in our own hearts which are viewed by the mind's eye. The emotions directly resulting from a consciousness of their existence there, are neither intensified nor abated by considerations of their origin. Blackness is blackness, howsoever its subject came to be black; and rottenness is rottenness, howsoever the subject came to be rotten. And if there is blackness and rottenness in a man's heart

a consciousness of those qualities will awaken in his soul a painful sense of guiltiness and degradation which he cannot shake off by reflecting that they were inbred at his birth, or inherited from his ancestors. The farther back he can trace them the more deeply seated he will probably find them; and the more deeply seated, the more damaging to the moral value of the subject in which they inhere, and the more emphatic will be the protest of his conscience against them; and the consciousness of them, so far from evoking self exculpation, will rather force from him the agonizing cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Still it will be urged that to ascribe all things to the will of God is to make him a participant in all wickedness, and so to impugn his holiness. There is a fallacy involved in this objection. It results from attaching moral qualities to human conduct. This we habitually do. But, evidently, it is only by a figure of speech that we can do so with propriety. Moral qualities inhere only in the hearts of intelligent beings. To speak of them as strictly and literally qualities of conduct is, therefore, inaccurate. Visible phenomena in outward conduct are in the abstract as destitute of moral quality as are the phenomena of inanimate matter. They are only an *evidence* of moral quality in the heart from which they spring. And of that they are evidence only to a limited extent. In just so far as they reveal an end or object of desire in that heart they afford such evidence, and no farther. Participation in the manifestation of visible phenomena in human conduct is, therefore, no proof of participation in qualities of heart. In these the participants may be as opposite as are their ends or objects of

desire ; as opposite as love and hatred. The truth, paradoxical as it may seem, is this: within a limited sphere of action man does a part. Within a boundless sphere, including that thus limited, God does all. Man does none the less because God does all ; and God does none the less because man does a part. What God does through creature agency is as truly and completely his own doing as if it he did it without the use of any agency whatever. And what he does through the voluntary act of his creature is as truly that creature's act, as truly and perfectly a free act, and as truly an index to the qualities of his heart as if he were an uncreated independent being. God is a participant, no doubt, or more than a participant, in the manifestation of all phenomena. But in none of them is there evidence of any unholy attribute in his nature. Whatever evidence we may imagine we have found of malevolence, or even of apathy, there, is outweighed a thousand fold by the voluntary sufferings and death of Christ in our behalf, if we accept his person as a veritable incarnation of divine attributes. For surely the depth and tenderness of love thereby evinced exceeds all human power of computation.

We make no progress whatever towards vindicating the divine holiness by denying the exercise of the divine sovereignty in determining the action of the human will. If we believe in the existence of a Creator and Governor of the universe at all, we must believe in his presence and the exercise of his power in maintaining that constancy of relations in the material world which we call natural law. But there was never yet a crime perpetrated by human hands which did not involve the operation of natural law. When John Wilkes Booth shot Abraham Lincoln it was not John Wilkes Booth that propelled the

deadly missile to the brain of his victim. His hand but aimed the weapon and released a certain spring. The operation of well known laws of matter accomplished all the rest. That good man's death was the immediate result of the operation of these laws. And the laws of matter are the laws of God. What, then, is gained for the vindication of his character by denying that the will of the assassin was also determined by the operation of his laws?

Nor do we make any nearer approach to such a vindication by invoking a distinction between the permissive and the causal decrees or purposes of the divine Being; since it is the purpose itself, and not the particular mode by which its accomplishment is effected, that demands reconciliation with the divine perfections. With most profound respect for the many great and good men who have advocated such a distinction, I am constrained to confess my inability to perceive that we have any need for it. Nor can I see that a truly scriptural monotheism affords any room for it. According to that, as I understand it, no part of this universe exists by God's *permission* merely. He "*created*" it, in all its parts; and he upholds it. The admission that any part of it, or anything in it, exists merely by his permission, independently of the exercise of his efficient energy, appears to my mind to be a concession which either atheism, dualism or polytheism is at liberty to appropriate. The vindication sought can be found, I think, only in the beneficence of his ends. And that beneficence is amply sufficient for the purpose, whatever agencies he may see fit to employ for accomplishing those ends. That beneficence on his part, as contrasted with the sinfulness of the agencies he employs in their accomplishment is most forcibly illustrated in the crucifixion of Christ. He says of him-

self: "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." This he did, as he himself declares, for the benefit of his sheep. Here was an exhibition of divine love.

But there were other participants in the scene; and what of them? Their moral character is described by Peter: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken and *with wicked hands* have crucified and slain." These "wicked hands" accomplished just what God's "hand" and his "counsel" determined before to be done," and in the accomplishment of which he himself co-operated.

Finally it will be said that these views make God the author of evil. But what is evil? The only thing, I think, that in its very essence and in the abstract can be alleged to be evil, is the experience of pain; not physical pain alone, but pain entering our experience through any avenue to consciousness whatever. We apply the term, it is true, to all that is sinful in conduct and to the moral qualities of heart evinced by such conduct. But all our ideas of moral distinctions grow out of our experience of pain and pleasure. The feeling of moral obligation or duty to others arises in our minds whenever we contemplate our relations to them as beings capable of pain or pleasure; and not otherwise. It is through our disposition of heart relative to their experience of pain or pleasure that moral quality of heart becomes apparent. And this is pre-eminently the case as respects the disposition we feel towards our Creator. The truest obedience to his precepts, is that which respects his pleasure.

"I do always those things that please him" said our Savior. This is an example for our imitation. To do his pleasure *because* it is his pleasure, is to act from the highest motive of which we are capable.

There are features of character the contemplation of which offends our moral sense. But that offense is itself a pain; and except for that pain, or others suggested by the contemplation, such features would be matters of indifference to us. Pain and pleasure are the criteria by which we estimate moral values; and, indeed, all other values. Pleasure is a positive value; pain a negative one. Pleasure is gain. Pain is loss. It is productiveness of pleasure that gives positive value to any substance, any virtue, or any attribute of being, whether material or spiritual. And it is productiveness of pain that gives negative value to all these things.

Now, as pleasure is essentially a good, we are led to extend the application of the term good to whatever is apparently a source of more pleasure than pain. And as pain is essentially an evil, we as naturally extend the application of the term evil to whatever is apparently a source of more pain than pleasure. Thus it results that we regard moral qualities of heart manifested through the affections of love and hatred as preeminently good or evil, the exercise of these affections being obviously the most prolific sources of pain and pleasure.

But it should be remarked that these affections could have no existence but for the possibility of pain and pleasure in the objects of their regard. Love is a desire for pleasure in the experience of its object. And hatred is a desire for pain in the experience of its object. It is evident, then, that the possibility of pain and pleasure is the one essential condition of the possible existence of

qualities of character possessing these opposite moral values. And such qualities can be said to be good or evil only as related to the experience or tending to the production of pain or pleasure, somewhere. If they are otherwise so we have no means of knowing it.

Pain and pleasure, on the contrary, are good or evil in themselves alone, considered apart from all relations. And I think they are the only things of which this can be said. Our Saviour has told us in substance, as Paul has told us in words, that love is the fulfilling of the law. Hatred, then, the very opposite of love, is the extreme of disobedience; the very greatest of sins. But deprive created beings of the capability of pain and pleasure, and, to their apprehension, you obliterate that law, and with it all moral distinctions. Such beings could have no conception of good or evil, love or hatred, right or wrong. They would be as incapable of these conceptions as a man born blind would be of conceiving colors.

Now if pain, in its very essence and in the abstract, is evil, evil *per se*, and is the only thing of which this can be said, the objection that the views above advocated make God the author of evil may be resolved into this, that they make him the author of pain.

But is this any disparagement of the divine character? Is it any impeachment of the goodness of the divine Being to suppose that the introduction of pain into the experience of his creatures was an element in his original plan of the universe and the administration of its laws?

In attempting to solve this question let us consider some of the uses and results of pain. What do our experience and observation teach? They teach us, first, that in a thousand instances we voluntarily subject our-

selves to pain for the purpose of obtaining some resultant pleasure of sufficient value to outweigh the pain.

Again, they teach us that in many cases painful experiences to which we are subjected *against* our will do actually result in a great amount of pleasure of the most refined, exalted kind; pleasure which, so far as we can see, we could not otherwise have realized.

They teach us further, that pain is an educating agent. It cautions us against danger. It guides us in the way to subsequent pleasure. It teaches us to avoid exposures and practices which, if persisted in, would utterly destroy all capacity for further enjoyment of any kind.

They teach us further, that pain is, to a great extent, an essential element in pleasure. Hope, for instance, is a most pleasurable emotion. But hope is a composition of desire and expectation. Desire alone is painful. Apart from imaginary possession of its object, and from all expectation of actual possession, it is pain, pure and simple. And expectation, apart from desire, is void of pleasure. But in combination what oceans of pleasure do they afford.

Again, they teach us that this peculiar pain which we experience in desire is the great propelling force that moves to action all the human powers. Its achievements cannot be numbered nor their grandeur adequately portrayed. Their history would be the history of the race and of all progress from earliest antiquity to the present hour.

Finally they teach us that pain is a refining, purifying, elevating agency. It prompts us to seek compensation for our sufferings. And in thus seeking we discover new sources of pleasure; "wells of water springing up into everlasting life," yielding pleasures which never cloy, and

of the purest and most exalted kind. It expands our sympathies and multiplies our pleasures, teaching us to rejoice in the good of others, and rendering it a luxury to relieve their pains and promote their pleasures. Thus the most beautiful characters are often developed in adversity and suffering.

These lessons of our experience and observation are confirmed by such passages of scripture as these: "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep thy word." "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

In view of all this, it is certainly no impeachment of the divine Goodness to allege that the divine Being is the author of pain. And if it is compatible with his goodness that he should inflict pain, it cannot be incompatible therewith that he should create the sources and actuate the instruments of its infliction from first to last. For all these are evil only as related to the pain inflicted.

It is no disparagement, then, of the divine character to ascribe to the Divine Will, as a first cause, the origin of evil.

But what is the result if we deny to it this origin? We must either assume that it had no originating cause whatever, or that it had its origin in some causal energy existing and operating independently of the God we worship. And either of these assumptions is repugnant to the teachings of scripture. The first is a step in the

direction of atheism ; the second, a step in the direction of polytheism. Either is adverse to the doctrine of one only true and living God, and we should shun them both.

It is a disparagement also of the power and wisdom of that God to impute to his original plan of the universe and its government any defect, any oversight, or any weak, unguarded point, where unforeseen or unintended causes of disturbance could possibly enter to frustrate his purpose, or impair in any measure the perfect working of that plan in full accordance with his will. That there was any miscarriage in the working of that plan necessitating the devising of a supplementary scheme in order to remedy a failure to produce intended results, is a suggestion as discordant with the perfections of his nature as with that comprehensiveness of his providence inculcated by our Savior ; a comprehensiveness which overlooked not a single sparrow in his dominions or a single hair of the human head.

Here it will be asked, how do we know, then, that the divine Being is a *good* Being? If he is the author of evil as well as of good, and the evil so abounds and is so intermingled with the good that we are often at a loss to determine which preponderates, and if we can trace to good results only a fraction of the evil of which we are cognizant, wherein do we find conclusive evidence that the God we worship is a God of love rather than an indifferent or malevolent one.

Here it must be confessed that experience and observation of ordinary events fail to afford the solution sought. They are too limited in their range. They furnish us only a fraction of the material required for reaching a solution by comparison as to quantity of the good and evil contemplated in the divine plan. They are sufficient

to demonstrate that its Author *may* be good, notwithstanding the evil developed in its working. But they fall far short of demonstrating that he really *is* so. They leave unsolved the most momentous question that ever taxed the energies of the human mind. Happily, however, we are not left to seek a solution of that question by the institution of any such comparison. The divine condescension has relieved us from the necessity of an undertaking so stupendous and so hopeless of accomplishment as that would be. "God was manifest in the flesh." The incarnation of the divine attributes in the person of Christ has settled that question forever with all who accept that incarnation as a veritable fact.

That question settled in the affirmative, we may confidently allege not only that the good contemplated in the divine plan outweighs the evil, but that all pain is inflicted for some good end. For under the government of a God of love it cannot be itself an end. As an end it is repugnant to the very nature of love. Under the government of such a Being it must, therefore, have some ulterior end, and that end must be good. It follows, then, that pain, though evil in the abstract, yet in its relations to ulterior ends, to great and glorious ends, and to the great aggregate of all experience, here and hereafter, is not evil but good. It follows also that the sources of pain, and all the agencies and instrumentalities by which it is produced, though most emphatically evil as related to proximate results experienced in pain, yet as related to ulterior results, the great ends of pain, they, too, are not evil, but good.

Still we shall be pursued by the pessimist and the sceptic with questions like these. Could not a God of infinite wisdom, love and power have devised a scheme

of government prolific of an equal amount of good with the one he has adopted, but excluding therefrom all evil?

And if he could would not such a scheme have been a better one than this?

To these questions the only answer that can be given or received by the human reason is that the pleasure of the Infinite is the supreme good, and that it pleased him to adopt the plan he has adopted.

To every one who loves him this answer will be perfectly satisfactory.

The pleasure of the Infinite is an infinite quantity; and such a quantity in the view of finite reason, cannot be increased by adding thereto, or diminished by taking therefrom. It is folly therefore for finite reason to attempt a solution of these questions or any other demanding a comparison of the good that is with that which might have been, had it pleased him to adopt a different plan.

There is another great subject upon which important light is thrown by the recognition of the operation of law in the manifestations of the human will; a subject of profoundest interest to every intelligent and thoughtful mind; the limitation of the divine severity in the punishment of sin.

In view of the limitation of the will power in man to conformity with law in its manifestations, it becomes perfectly obvious that the right of the divine Being to inflict suffering upon his creatures cannot be explained by the fact that they have transgressed his precepts. This conclusion is confirmed by the indisputable fact that he often inflicts it on creatures who have never transgressed. Witness in proof of this, the evident suffering of the new born babe, whose first utterance is a wail, and

the plaintive bleating of the tender lamb, shivering in the wintry blast.

It is *fitting* that he should inflict it on condition of transgression, both as a means of restraint and as an expression of the aversion with which he views such transgression considered apart from his own beneficent ends in making it his instrument. But the fitness of the infliction does not account for his right to inflict it.

There is, however, an obvious explanation of that right. We all regard pleasure as a commercial equivalent for pain. God imparts pleasure. He is the giver of every good gift. To him we are indebted for every pleasurable experience, whether of sensation or emotion, which we have ever enjoyed. During every enjoyable moment of our existence, from the earliest dawn of consciousness, this debt has been increasing in amount. This indebtedness to our Creator imposes on us the obligation to serve him. Our service and our love are the only return we can render. Owing him the service, it is his, not ours, to dictate what that service shall be. When he bids us suffer, the obligation to obey is as binding as when he bids us act.

And this service of suffering, when required by him, the devout and grateful heart will willingly and lovingly yield. Its language will be, "the cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" "Not my will, but thine be done." But, whether the debtor be willing or unwilling, it is the right of him to whom he is indebted to exact the service. And this right in the Creator is independent of any act of transgression on the part of the creature. Its foundation is his own beneficence. Creature transgression adds nothing thereto. Creature obedience takes nothing therefrom. How far he shall make

obedience or disobedience a ground of discrimination in exercising it, as hereinbefore remarked, is a question of fitness and utility, not of the possession of a right. So far as he sees fit he may prescribe and publish conditions on which he will exercise it. But, *antecedently to all conditions except the blessings he bestows, the right is his.* Its foundation is his own beneficence, and I think we shall look in vain for any other. We must include in his beneficence, however, his beneficent purposes, as well as his beneficent acts. For with him whose purposes never change, and whose power is adequate to their fulfillment, a purpose is as sure of accomplishment, and possesses as real a value, as if it were already accomplished.

Now, if the good which our Creator has bestowed and purposes to bestow upon his creatures is the ground, and the only ground, of his right to inflict suffering upon them, there is a clearly definable limit which he will never exceed in the exercise of that right. He will exact from them no more than an equivalent for what he has given and purposes to give.

This conclusion applies to his dealings with his creatures, not only collectively, but individually as well. It is not invalidated by the consideration that the infliction of pain upon the few may sometimes benefit the many.

Humanity is an aggregate of individuals, but each individual is a distinct entity. He is distinct from his Creator and distinct from every fellow creature. To this fact his consciousness unequivocally testifies. This distinctness of personality lies at the foundation of all his personal rights and duties. As this distinctness cannot be lost by

merging the person in a community of persons, so neither can his personal rights and duties be extinguished by such a merging.

This distinctness of personality renders him a distinct object of divine Love. Now the affection of love presents two distinct aspects. In one aspect it is a desire for pleasure in the experience of its object; in the other, it is an aversion to pain in the experience of that object.

The demands of love may, therefore, be divided into two distinct classes: the positive and the negative. The former employ the formula, "Thou shalt;" the latter the formula, "Thou shalt *not*." The former may all be represented by this, "Thou shalt impart pleasure;" the latter by this, "Thou shalt not cause pain."

Both these demands are urged by love in favor of each individual object of her regard. Between them, however, there is this fundamental difference. In urging the latter she respects as sacred the distinct personality of each of those objects, while in urging the former she may, if she please, disregard it altogether. A positive demand in favor of the few she may relinquish for one in favor of the many. A negative one, on the contrary, she will not thus relinquish. A demand of this class she will yield on one condition only. That condition is full compensation for the pain inflicted; pleasure imparted to the specific subject thereof in measure equal to the measure of the pain. Love will not tolerate the infliction of uncompensated pain. And respect for the distinct personality of the subject thereof forbids the substitution of another person as the recipient of the compensation due the sufferer. Could we conceive of the object of our worship as capable of subjecting one of the humblest of his creatures to uncompensated suffering

solely for his own pleasure, we could not possibly regard him as God of love. To suppose, then, that he could do it for the benefit of other creatures, however multitudinous in numbers, would be to set the creature above the Creator, making creature pleasure the supreme good.

It is from this negative demand of love, "thou shalt not cause pain," that we derive our ideas of what is just and right between man and man, and of what is righteous in our Creator as distinguished from what is gratuitously beneficent. It is conformity with this negative demand that constitutes righteousness. Positive pleasure is a gratuity; a free gift of our Creator. Exemption from pain is not a gift; it is a right; a right sacred and dear in the eyes of divine Love; a right of which she will never divest us or see us divested, on any ground or by any agency, except in exchange for a full equivalent. Indeed it is the only right that man can claim as a primitive possession. As between himself and his Maker it is fundamental to all others. Others can be acquired only by some expenditure of this. As between himself and his fellows, however, the gifts of God are also rights. In his intercourse with them he may therefore acquire others by bartering these.

Neither is the conclusion in question invalidated by the consideration that a full and complete expression, through the infliction of pain, of the divine displeasure in view of sin, when viewed apart from the ends of divine love and wisdom in using it as a means, would require that such infliction be administered in infinite measure. That some adequate expression of that displeasure was demanded from a holy God as an expression of his holiness; demanded by a regard for his own glory, as well as by love for his creatures, is perfectly apparent. Such was

the positive demand of love. But such an expression through the infliction of uncompensated suffering would have been barred by the negative demand of that same love. Provision had therefore been made in that great all-embracing plan which embraced the fall of Adam and the sins of all his posterity, for meeting both these demands. And when the fullness of time came that expression was given. In the person of One in whom dwelt "all the fullness of the Godhead," but who condescended to become the representative of our race, and as such to submit to the suffering required, that expression was made more ample and impressive than it could possibly have been made by any infliction which merely finite human beings were capable of sustaining. But even in this, the most impressive expression of divine displeasure ever given, the negative as well as the positive demand of love was fully met. For while the sufferer was "wounded for our transgression" and "bruised for our iniquities" he was assured that he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." His reward was the satisfaction of his love; a most unselfish end, but still a compensation in full for the suffering endured.

I think, therefore, we may regard it as an invariable law in the administration of the divine government, that the Administrator will never, himself, endure, will never inflict upon one of his creatures, and will never permit to be endured by them, uncompensated suffering. If there is within the limits of his dominion a single creature who has rendered a service of suffering in excess of the compensation he has realized, a righteous God may be depended on to render him full compensation in the future.

Even Satan finds delight, no doubt, in the indulgence

of his malice towards God and man, and in the constant endeavor to overthrow the kingdom of Christ; though it is a pleasure which must be forever neutralized by the bitterness of constant disappointment and the humiliations of perpetually recurring defeat.

But let us remember that if we may not convert the boon of existence into an appalling calamity, we may reduce its future value to zero and still remain debtors for numberless blessings in the past. Let us remember also that these accumulated blessings constitute a debt that is due on demand, and that he to whom it is due has both the right and the power to enforce his claims, exacting from his debtor the uttermost farthing. Let us also beware that in view of the limitations of the divine severity we do not think lightly of future retribution. The scriptures treat it as a fearful thing. They aim to impress its fearfulness by the use of the most glowing and impressive imagery. Let the fearful import of that imagery make its full impression upon all our minds. Let us not flatter ourselves that the picture has been overdrawn. The history of this world is a history of suffering; of sighs and groans and agony and tears; of fierce encounters, brutal violence, remorseless cruelty, and excruciating tortures. Fire and sword, and pestilence and famine, figure in the drama. The rack, the stake, the dungeon and the cross are there conspicuous. The outward turmoil and the visible suffering have, perhaps, been more than rivaled by the inward struggle of conflicting passions and the unseen anguish of crushed and riven hearts. There is no form or intensity of suffering conceivable that has not been realized in human experience. Shall we then discredit the disclosures and disregard the warnings of God's word with respect to the future? It may not be

in the power of our present faculties to conceive, or of human language to describe, the direful scenes of that experience that awaits in a future world the persistently impenitent in this. Let us bear in mind that as depravity deepens, the love of sin will correspondingly increase, and consequent misery will equally increase. And in a world where a fuller development of sinful passions and of mental power shall reveal the profounder depths of possible depravity, who can say what deeper and more copious draughts of consequent misery may not be quaffed?

It is pertinent here to remark that the exercise of the Divine Sovereignty, as recognized in scripture, in making "one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor," viewed in the light of such a limitation of suffering, for whatever end, as above described, leaves as little ground for complaint on one hand as for vain glory on the other. He that receives least of the divine favor receives his due; and it may well be said to him, as was said by the benevolent householder to the dissatisfied and envious laborer: "Friend, I do thee no wrong. Take that thine is, and go thy way." I will graciously bestow on others what seems good in my own eyes. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?"

To him that receives most it may be said: It is grace that hath made thy lot to differ from that of the vilest. Hast thou been obedient? It was grace that prompted that obedience. Hast thou attained the prize through the diligent use of all the means within thy reach? It was grace that instituted those means and prompted thee to use them. Hast thou fulfilled the conditions of a promise? It was grace that made that promise and led thee to fulfill its conditions.

“ Grace first contrived the way
 To save rebellious man;
 And *all the steps* that grace display,
 Which drew the wondrous plan.”

I will only add that the constancy of law, whether in the manifestations of the human will or elsewhere, offers no obstacle to the answering of prayer by our Heavenly Father. The divine Being is not trammled by his own laws. His laws are adapted to his purposes; and one of his purposes is to respond without failure to the prayer of faith. Such response is therefore in accordance with law.

This does not assure the granting of the petition to the very letter of the language in which it was expressed. Genuine faith always involves deference to divine Wisdom, as well as confidence in divine Love, and will always be satisfied with such a response as Love shall prompt and Wisdom dictate. And that response will never be found to be of less value to the supplicant than literal compliance with his petition would have been.

But whatever the response, it is in accordance with law. For the prayer itself, with all its attendant conditions, and the response, whatever it may be, as well as that constancy of relations which is law, are all embraced in that great all-embracing and harmonious plan in accordance with which our Heavenly Father works. In answering it, therefore, in accordance with that plan conflict with law is clearly impossible.

How surprising that one who finds in the constancy of law no obstacle to granting the reasonable request of a fellow mortal should imagine that he of whose will that constancy is an expression should meet therein an obstacle to doing his own pleasure. “If ye, then, being evil,

know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him."

Neither does that constancy impair our prospects of success in laboring for the reformation of the world and the salvation of souls. Indeed it is a *sine qua non* of successful effort in this great enterprise. So far as the choice of means is left to human judgment, a knowledge of the laws of mind is our only guide in adapting them to the desired end. For, as in our treatment of matter, we must avail ourselves of the laws of matter in order to effect material results, so in our treatment of mind we must avail ourselves of the laws of mind in order to effect moral results.

Let us rejoice, then, that we can depend on their undeviating constancy. They are our faithful servants and coadjutors in all our efforts to benefit our fellow men. The same may be said of their operation in all our efforts to reach higher attainments in virtue ourselves. And with this accords the exhortation of the apostle, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

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